

ED 027 558

CG 003 388

By-McEvoy, Theodore L.

Psychological Growth, Cosmopolitanism, and Selection of Students for Cross-Cultural Educational Programs.

Occasional Papers on Undergraduate Study Abroad.

Council on International Educational Exchange, New York, N.Y.

Pub Date Nov 67

Note-9p.; Paper presented at the Twentieth Anniversary Membership Conference of the Council on International Exchange, New York, New York, November 15-17, 1967.

EDRS Price MF-\$0.25 HC-\$0.55

Descriptors-\*College Students, \*Emotional Development, \*Exchange Programs, Individual Differences, \*Intercultural Programs, International Education, Maturation, Personality Development, \*Psychological Evaluation, Role Conflict, Student Exchange Programs

It is suggested that greater attention be given to psychological development assessment in the selection of students for cross-cultural exchange programs. To date little effort has been made to evaluate such program objectives as: (1) fostering international understanding, and (2) attainment of educational experiences not available domestically. Thus, the program's effects on: (1) students, (2) host cultures, and (3) origin country of students are not known. Some identified student reactions are: (1) immobilization (inability to interact in the host country) resulting in early return or emotional breakdown, (2) overidentification with the host culture resulting in severe readjustment problems, (3) underinvolvement resulting in rejection of the host culture, pursuit of familiar cues and ultimate self-recrimination or disillusionment, and (4) viable integration, the most common reaction (student accommodates his own and host country's values) resulting in profound respect for the integrity of the host culture. The most successful exchange student, however, transcends his cultural parochialism and during a transitional phase, termed cosmopolitanism, he achieves cultural and temporal relativity and self-objectification. (NG)

# **Occasional Papers**

**on**

## **Undergraduate Study Abroad**

*Issued by the*

**Council on International Educational Exchange**

**(formerly Council on Student Travel)**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE  
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE  
PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS  
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION  
POSITION OR POLICY.

**"PSYCHOLOGICAL GROWTH, COSMOPOLITANISM, AND SELECTION  
OF STUDENTS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS"**

Theodore L. McEvoy  
Associate Director  
Student Counseling Center  
University of California, Los Angeles

PUBLICATION NO. 7

THIS IS ONE OF A SERIES OF SELECTED PRESENTATIONS BY SPEAKERS  
AND PANELISTS AT WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES SPONSORED  
BY THE COUNCIL ON INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE.

**"PSYCHOLOGICAL GROWTH, COSMOPOLITANISM, AND SELECTION  
OF STUDENTS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS"**

**Dr. Theodore L. McEvoy, Associate Director, Student Counseling Center, University of California, Los Angeles, presented this paper at the afternoon session of Workshop I, "Selecting Students and Staff for Overseas Programs," at the Twentieth Anniversary Membership Conference of the Council on International Educational Exchange, November 15-17, 1967, New York City.**

## PSYCHOLOGICAL GROWTH, COSMOPOLITANISM AND SELECTION OF STUDENTS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS\*

Despite the widespread incidence of cross-cultural educational programs throughout the world, there is surprisingly little known about the effects of such experiences. International education is not a new phenomenon. In the broadest sense, it is certainly as old as recorded history, but it is with the modern contemporary condition that we are concerned. Travel, strange places and exotic habits have always captured the fancy of men and their ubiquitous attractiveness may well be a substantive motive underlying modern educational programs as well as those of older days. But the sheer magnitude and potential effects of present programs requires that a more thorough understanding of them exist. This is especially so when enormous energies and expenditures are involved, which represent the efforts of universities, private philanthropic foundations, or even nations to achieve certain idealistic objectives. Presumably international study provides possibilities which cannot be achieved by local or domestic efforts. The latter point is crucial because it follows that unless cross-cultural programs can achieve unique and desired effects that cannot be produced by local efforts, then the energies used in facilitating them are completely wasted.

There are two commonly recognized general objectives of cross-cultural programs. These are normally invoked for the purpose of justifying international education:

1. In many instances students study abroad because a given locale (nation or university) cannot provide the specific educational opportunities which can be provided elsewhere. It is deemed desirable by students, origin countries, and host institutions that students should undertake the special curricula available elsewhere in the world. Small and developing countries therefore make possible, encourage, or even support educational migration, usually on the assumption that the fruits of such efforts will be reaped locally after the return of the students.

---

\*

We wish to express our profound gratitude to Dr. David W. Palmer for his invaluable help in formulating these ideas and the many, many young persons in Peace Corps, Project India, Project Crossroads Africa, and the University of California Education Abroad Program for the experiences and insights which they shared with us.

The ideas expressed in this paper are discussed at greater length in four primary sources:

1. McEvoy, T.L. and Palmer, D.W. "The process of assessment and selection in Peace Corps: Its nature and effects." Unpublished manuscript.
2. McEvoy, T.L. "Adjustment of American youth in cross-cultural programs." The Journal of College Student Personnel (in press).
3. McEvoy, T.L. "Cosmopolitanism: An intellectual challenge and opportunity." The Journal of Higher Education (in preparation).
4. McEvoy, T.L., Borhanmanesh, M. and Erdynast, A. "The educational and social adaptation of Chinese students in an American university." Paper presented at American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C., September, 1967.

2. Many exchange programs exist in institutions or countries which are able to provide, locally, any specialized curriculum which is available elsewhere. Educational migration, in these instances, is fostered because of different objectives. These objectives are usually loosely defined, but they reflect the idealistic expectation that cross-cultural education will:

- a) foster international understanding and good-will, and
- b) will add an important experiential educational dimension for the student that would not be available through local study.

Since, for the most part, U.S., Canadian, and European schools are able to provide their own peoples with adequate curricula (except in some advance specializations) it is the second generalized objective which underlies their educational needs and which presumably motivates their students to study abroad. Like motherhood, patriotism, and fellowship, no one objects in principle to the ideals of international good-will and mutual understanding. Nor would anyone in education seriously reject the ideal of achieving the fresh and original insight and understanding in one's studies which is promised in cross-cultural education.

The major difficulties associated with evaluating the success of these general objectives are twofold. First, the specific purposes of international education have been too vaguely conceived for systematic evaluation. Second, remarkably little effort has been made to determine whether they are, in fact, being realized or whether opposite effects obtain. Because of the central interest of Americans and Europeans in the second generalized objective, we will limit our comments to a consideration of it and focus primarily on those implications which concern the rigorous selection of students as program participants. It is at once apparent that any ideal espousing both international understanding and substantively improved educational experiences (as compared with domestic possibilities) would have to be evaluated in many contexts, as for example:

- a) the collective effects of the exchange students on the host institution and the host culture;
- b) the collective effects of exchange students on their origin institution and culture after their return;
- c) the effect of the host institution and the host culture, with regard to cultural impact, on the student;
- d) the effects of the cross-cultural education experience on the academic progress of the student.

Very little is known about any of these effects, most especially those implied in (a) and (b). The greatest direct impact is on the individual student who participates in the educational venture and this is reflected both in his academic-intellectual experience and in his general reaction to living in an alien milieu. Our experience with former participants in many overseas programs has led to the discovery that cross-cultural encounters may produce remarkable effects on humans. Some of these generalized effects are clearly benign, some are highly undesirable, and some are remarkably salutary.



These observations have led us to consider the relevance of a theory of growth or of human development for understanding the success with which students encounter and master the total education experience afforded by a cross-cultural opportunity. A theory of growth does not lend itself to a direct assessment of academic gains; such an assessment is not easily conceived of, anyway, in the aridity and superficiality of American ideas concerning education. Such obvious, and obviously invalid, notions as grades, memorization of facts, and regurgitation of definitions are no better suited to a substantive evaluation of foreign education than they are of domestic education. We have chosen to focus on some of the more fundamental changes which may occur in students. It may be indeed difficult, if not impossible, to separate the effects of formal instruction from those of the total cultural experience. It may not prove necessary.

Before further pursuing the notion of psychological development and its relationship to cross-cultural experiences let us examine the way in which young people react, in general terms, to a cross-cultural experience.

A very important, though uncommon response is one in which the student becomes functionally immobilized. This immobilization is usually both acute and severe and is manifested by prominent symptoms and complete inability to function adequately. The individual neither accepts nor rejects the values of the host culture and cannot interact successfully with it, nor can he effectively rely on the values of his origin culture or old patterns of adaptation nor draw support from them. Despite its infrequency this is an important reaction. Such immobility has severe and disruptive consequences. The affected person is likely to have been limited in his success in adapting to his own culture, and these difficulties are aggravated in the new situation because of the increased confusion with respect to new alternative values and attitudes. In such instances there is a high probability of an early return to the origin culture or a severe emotional breakdown or both.

A second common reaction is manifested by the excessive abandonment, by the student, of his own cultural values and standards and the indiscriminate acceptance of the counterpart of these from those existing in the host culture. This is a condition which might be termed over-identification. It has marked and long term consequences. One cannot readily reject values and attitudes which have developed over a period of 17 to 25 or more years without creating great internal tensions, to say nothing of the complexities which will arise in one's dealing with fellow participants, friends, and family. Particularly with regard to political and moral matters, and especially if the participant actively engages in behavior incompatible with his prior values, the effects may be severe. Similarly, excessive identification of the participant with the dress and eating practices of the host culture also has untoward effects. Incautious eating or drinking behavior often results in acute and sometimes serious illness. Over-dependence on visible habits or the excessive identification with host culture values may particularly result in rather severe readjustment problems on return to the origin culture. Many so-called re-entry problems stem directly from this mode of cross-cultural adaptation.

A third pattern is one in which the participant rejects all of the values and institutions of the host culture and avoids interaction with it. Instead, he remains excessively dependent upon his own culture, a condition which may be termed under-involvement. While there may be little effect on the student, such reactions may

not serve the objectives of the program. Moreover, they do not result in any growth or development in students. Not only does he fail to be enriched by the cross-cultural venture, but he is often much less effective in his work than is desired. So much energy is expended in the pursuit of familiar cues--other Americans, Skippy peanut butter, American music, or the local counterparts of the Hilton hotels that he performs poorly academically or proves to be a burden on field administration and other students. It is also likely that such persons find themselves in outright discord or conflict with host natives. Such poor adaptation may result in feelings of guilt, disappointment, and self-recrimination. At best, for the more retiring and passive student the total experience may be one of disillusionment or an unproductive limbo.

Fortunately, the commonest, and clearly the most constructive adjustment has very different consequences. This alternative, a viable integration, is manifested by a happy and judicious accommodation between the values and practices of one's own cultural background and those of the host culture. In these cases the student is able to make easily those temporary or permanent alterations in his own value system which permit him to communicate readily and naturally with host natives, to gain their respect and to broaden his own repertoire of meaningful responses. On the other hand, he is not left isolated and lonely or without purpose or internal guides. He is, equally able to draw on his own values and customs. This kind of viable integration does not produce feelings of guilt, it does not result in transgression of one's basic ethics nor does it lead to indiscriminate behavior which may have rather capricious or undesirable consequences. These students grow in the direction of a broader world view. They may manifest an acceptance of local customs by adopting some of the outward cultural signs such as manner of dress, manner of speech or manner of deference for the institutions and the persons of the host culture. They demonstrate acceptance, or at least understanding of, those ethical, political, and other value systems which are characteristic of the indigenous peoples. But above all, they achieve and demonstrate a profound sense of respect for the integrity of the host culture and its members. Such students are never impelled to "go native"; they do not compromise their own moral and ethical principles. They are never in a state of severe conflict or guilt for having pursued activities which are conflict-laden or deeply incompatible with their own value system. More importantly, in terms of his growth, the values the student has retained, those that he has modified and those that he has added have all been more objectively realized in his conscious awareness--more differentiated, more consciously prized, more part of himself and more available to his understanding. He is, because of the experience, a more mature and differentiated person. The new synthesis is that of a fuller more worldly person who has begun to transcend his own cultural parochialism, but one who has not confused his identity with that of the host culture.

It would appear that one of the most salutary effects of cross-cultural education is in transcending one's parochial outlook. This is a truly educational objective worthy of careful cultivation. It is a qualitative rather than a quantitative dimension. It is a total personality transformation as well as an intellectual development.

Let us return to the matter of psychological development of growth. Human development occurs along many dimensions. In the early years of life the changes that occur

in visual-motor coordination, differential intellectual functioning, and interpersonal relations are dramatic. The natural sequence of developmental stages is so predictable and well known that they have been carefully charted and incorporated into widely recognized personality theories. There is a libido theory of growth, a theory of intellectual development, of visual-motor development and, later, competence in skill acquisition. There is an interpersonal theory and theories relating to the development of ego functions. Almost without exception theories of human development state or suggest that psychological growth is completed by the middle or late adolescent years. Developmental theories end with the word "maturity." It is rarely defined and when it is the definition reflects the religio-social values of the theorist in idealized terms. It would seem that for those past 20, life is little more than the monotonous playing out of early developmental influences, habits, and values.

To the more informed student of human development such a conclusion may well be an accurate description of many persons. Arrested development (immaturity) is widely observable. Often the arrest has occurred at an alarmingly early level of development. As most persons approach adult years the unevenness of their growth along different parameters is easily recognized. Similarly as people approach the adult years, the rate of change or growth tends to slow remarkably. It is therefore the case that in any group of young college students one will find radical variation in psychological growth. These differences are easily blurred in the face of superficial similarities. It is no secret to any college professor, however, that some of his students are intellectually so agile and creative that they challenge all of his resources as a teacher, whereas others can scarcely be coaxed along to do barely passing work. Nor to the social scientist would it come as a surprise that some college students can adapt to the rigors of independence only with constant and extensive reassurance, support and assistance while others not only manage their own lives deftly, and with little energy, but are able readily to assume multiple responsibilities for others.

Development from childhood to late adolescence is dominated, above all, by what might be termed "socialization." In adolescence it is especially marked by the working through of attitudes toward, and relationships with, the opposite sex and by focusing of one's interests and energy toward a work commitment. These are the final great chores of adolescence--chores which prepare the adolescent to enter the adult world of marriage and work. For the young person who has mastered all of the earlier phases of development and who has achieved direction and commitment, both toward the opposite sex and toward work, these are no new challenges within his social sphere. That is not to say that the demands of career, marriage, and family do not offer real challenges, but it is rather to say that these are not qualitatively new challenges.

A new direction in growth is in the direction of transcending one's cultural or social parochialism. This is, in a sense, a going beyond one's socialization. It is a phase of growth which we have witnessed among the really successful participants in cross-cultural experiences. It is a transitional phase of growth which we have termed cosmopolitanism.

Cosmopolitanism, as defined here, is not an affectation or feigned worldliness. Rather it is a profound inner development. The seeds of cosmopolitanism often are



detected in the bright, inquiring, sophisticated matured young adult, especially among those who have most successfully encountered and mastered sustained cross-cultural experiences. Not every American college junior studying in a European university for eight months achieves this level of differentiation and integration. Rather, it appears that a cross-cultural experience, because it upsets cultural equilibrium, or perhaps more graphically social parochialism, does afford an unusually rich opportunity for movement towards such a level of development.

Cosmopolitanism, as it develops, in turn, allows the individual new perspectives and new opportunities for growth. Perhaps more critically, it begins to free the individual from those unconscious ties which have limited his identity and, in a sense, his intellectual and perceptual movement, to the prescribed traces of his native social milieu. The new perspectives that so begin to operate may be described as three: cultural relativity, temporal relativity, and self-objectivity. They serve to further differentiate this process of liberation from the parochialism of one's origins. Cultural relativity entails the capacity for understanding the cultural values and mores of other peoples, and for a respect and tolerance of those values and mores--especially those which differ from one's own. It is, furthermore, the capacity for questioning critically and objectively, in a constructive and instructive way, the values and institutions held inalienable or sacred by one's own social milieu.

Temporal relativity entails the capacity for distinguishing and judging, with some sense of confidence, the commonplace, the irrelevant, and the transitory from the unique, the relevant and the enduring. Such a perspective necessitates an historical understanding for ideas and events. Arrowsmith\* speaks incisively to this point when he notes, unhappily, that the humanities (and, alas, we might add, the social sciences) are presently bogged down in an almost endless proliferation of uninspired, uncritical, worthless ideas. This sorry state of affairs, he believes, has occurred, in part, because the present generation of researchers are preoccupied with the esoteric and view the world from a trivial and constricted perspective.

Self-objectification entails the capacity of viewing oneself from outside of oneself, and with dispassion. From ancient times, great thinkers have stressed the fulfilling qualities of self-knowledge. In this vein, Socrates is credited with having said that to achieve the good life, it is necessary to know thyself. Gordon Allport\*\* in addressing himself to maturity has noted the striking correlation between insight and the sense of humor. In this context he remarked, "the novelist Meredith says it is the ability to laugh at the things one loves (including, of course, oneself, and all that pertains to oneself), and still to love them. The real humorist perceives behind some solemn event--himself for instance--the contrast between pretension and performance. It is this kind of self-understanding that is manifested in a cosmopolitan perspective. Cosmopolitanism is, simply stated, the intellectual temperament development which transcends the here, the now, and the "I."

---

\* Arrowsmith, W. "The shame of our graduate schools." Harper's Magazine, March, 1966.

\*\* Allport, G. Patterns and growth of personality. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964, p.292.

Turning to the question of selection of students for international education programs, the following generalization seems feasible. Students will maximally profit from a cross-cultural encounter if they are developmentally ready for the emergence of a cosmopolitan outlook; students too involved with the more prominent conflict and challenges of adolescence will find the added ambiguity and burden of a cross-cultural encounter excessive. It also appears that there may be an optimal time in human development for cross-cultural exposure. At very early ages, temporary cross-cultural encounters may produce no noticeable effects, whereas permanent migration will result in nearly complete identification with the new culture. At very old ages, temporary or permanent changes will produce little internal alterations.

Most of the prominent adjustment difficulties to cross-cultural programs manifested in the young adults whom we have observed reflect clearly that they have not yet successfully mastered the problems of middle and late adolescence. Marked language difficulties is the one notable exception. In ordinary terms these young people suffer from acute and severe homesickness, separation difficulties, lack of direction, gross immaturity, boyfriend-girlfriend problems or ambivalence to the program. Too many of them want "to grow up" or achieve instant independence by undertaking an overseas adventure.

Recruitment and solicitation of student participants is often predicated primarily on quota considerations rather than careful evaluation of prospective candidates. While efforts are made to identify and separate applicants who manifest gross psychopathology, no effort is usually made to assess developmental maturity. In the absence of other, more adequate criteria, grade point average is frequently used as a primary basis for selection. Not only is grade point average a doubtfully valid criterion for assessing intellectual development, but it is wholly unsuited to assessing any other developmental features. The assumption, widely held, that cross-cultural educational experiences are good for every student is naive. They are potentially valuable learning experiences, but only for the student ready to effectively encounter and master them.

It is eminently clear that different educational programs will have different specific objectives. Each of these objectives will, in turn, dictate the criteria for student selection that are relevant. However, it does seem reasonable that whatever the primary objectives of an educational program, a central consideration should be the psychological growth of student participants. It is incumbent that we better understand the nature of such growth and especially as it is influenced by cross-cultural encounter. Such understanding will greatly assist both in the sound selection of student participants and in the development of programs specifically suited to facilitate such growth.